



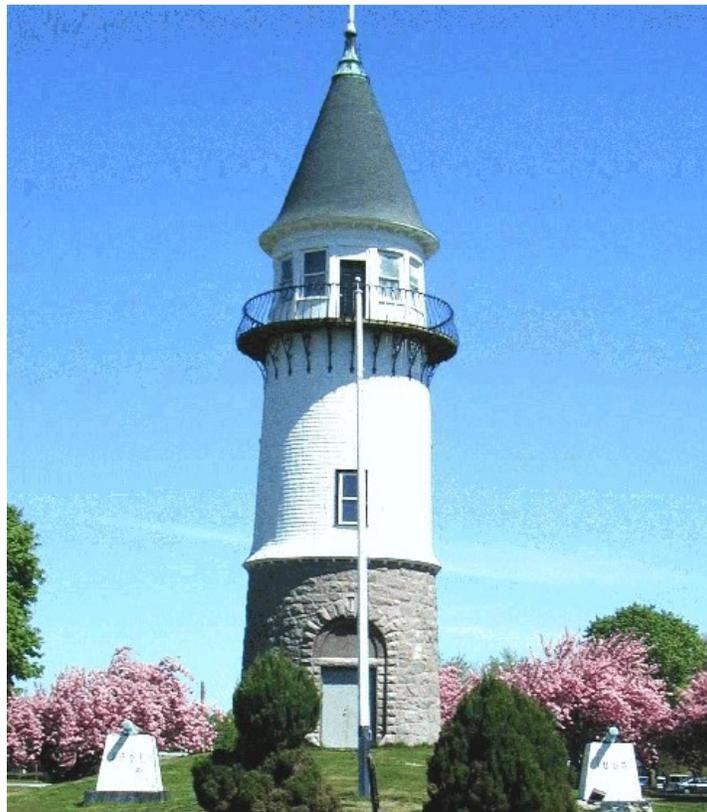
Rhode Island Department of Human Services



DIVISION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Annual Report to the General Assembly

Fiscal Year 2011



February 2012

Lincoln D. Chafee, Governor
Steven M. Costantino, Secretary, Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Sandra M. Powell, Director, Department of Human Services



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

**Department of Human Services
Division of Veterans Affairs
RHODE ISLAND VETERANS HOME
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Bristol, Rhode Island 02809-0689
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The great tradition of Rhode Island serving its Veterans began in 1889 with the formation of the State Board of Soldiers Relief. The first charge given to the Board was to determine the feasibility of constructing a Veterans Home. The first temporary home was established in the fall of that year in Wickford Village, followed by the construction of a permanent home in the Town of Bristol in 1890 and the first resident admitted to the Home in May 1891.

Over a century has passed since the State Board was created, and today we serve the Veterans of our State with a full range of services. The Veterans Affairs office provides community outreach and assistance to any Veteran seeking services from the State or the Veterans Administration. The Veterans Home provides the full range of care for those Veterans requiring it, from transitional housing and assistance in obtaining permanent residence in the community, to domiciliary housing and the entire spectrum of long term care. The Veterans Memorial Cemetery provides a perpetually dignified setting for the Veteran and spouse as the final memorial of their service to our State and country.

There are over two hundred employees who dedicate themselves daily to serving our Veterans. Some of them are readily recognizable as the Veteran applies for services or receives care. There are countless others who work behind the scenes to provide the quality of the services the Veterans receive. To a person, each will tell you they do their job gratefully because of the opportunity to give something back in appreciation for the Veteran's sacrifice. Our State should be very proud of them.

Respectfully,

Rick Baccus
Brigadier General (Retired), USA
Administrator

Foreword

Operating under the auspices of the Department of Human Services, the Division of Veterans Affairs provides services to Rhode Island veterans and their families. The Department has made a commitment to ensuring that the needs of all of Rhode Island's 72,835 veterans are made a priority by offering quality programs and services befitting those who have served their country with valor and patriotism. The RI Division of Veterans Affairs will continue to work with the many veterans' organizations to assure the professional and dignified delivery of services to veterans and their families.

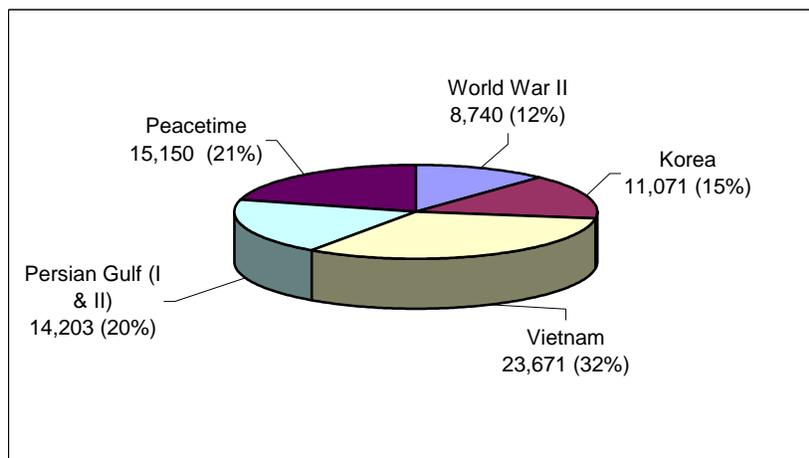
Division Overview Veterans in Rhode Island



Totalling nearly 57,700, seventy-nine percent of RI veterans have served our country during a wartime period. This qualifies them for a full-range of benefits provided by the RI Division of Veterans Affairs. These benefits include a comprehensive range of social, medical and rehabilitative services, as well as burial services. Some benefits are also available to veterans' spouses and dependents. Benefits are provided through one of the Division's three units: the Veterans Affairs Office, the Rhode Island Veterans Home and the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Based on data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the largest segment of war service veterans distributed by service period are those who served in Vietnam, followed by the Persian Gulf (I & II combined), Korea and World War II. While the overall ranking by distribution hasn't changed significantly over the past several years, the number of soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf has, for the first time, surpassed the number of Rhode Island veterans having served in Korea.

Total War Service Veterans 72,835



Division Budget

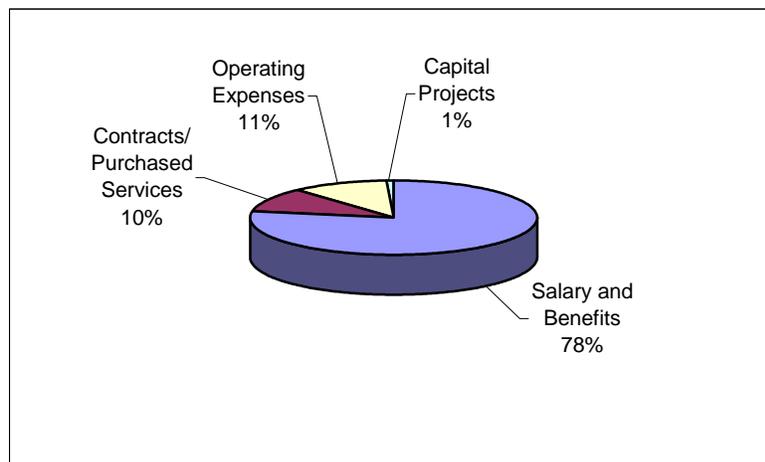
The Division of Veterans Affairs had 209 employees and an operating budget of \$27,038,840 in FY 2011. Over ninety percent of the Division's budget is spent at the Veterans Home where direct residential care and other medical-related and long-term care services are provided. The remaining amount is utilized by the Veterans Affairs Office and the Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

As shown in the table below, employee salary and benefit costs continue to be the most significant expenditure for the Division at over \$21 million for the fiscal year 2011, an increase of ten percent from FY 2010. Purchased services, which include ambulance services, therapy services, and nursing pools totaled \$2.8 million for the fiscal year, a decrease from FY 2010. Operating expenses increased slightly from FY 2010. Capital purchases and equipment costs for FY 2010 were \$ 0.2 million.

RI Veterans' Affairs Expenditures FY 2010 and 2011		
	FY 2010	FY 2011
Salary and Benefits	\$ 18,830,212	\$ 21,059,039
Contracts/Purchased Services	\$ 3,026,905	\$ 2,831,000
Operating Expenses	\$ 2,763,580	\$ 2,931,836
Capital Projects	\$ 553,220	\$ 216,965
Totals	\$ 25,173,917	\$ 27,038,840
FTE	214	209

The following chart shows how the overall \$27.0 million in expenditures were spent Division-wide in FY 2011:

Total expenditures spent Division-wide \$ 27 million

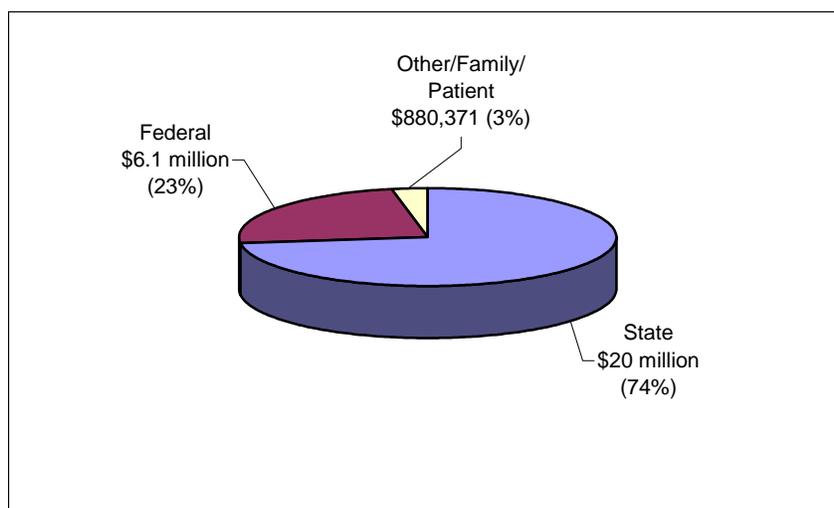


Division Resources

The source of financing for the Division of Veterans Affairs is comprised of state appropriations, federal funds, and other income from veterans and their families.

The \$27,038,840 in revenues funding the Division's budget included \$20 million in state general revenues, \$6.1 million in federal funds and \$0.88 million in Family/Patient Contributions. Federal funding consists primarily of patient per diem payments and reimbursements for capital projects. Federal reimbursements for capital projects are received after completion of the project and are used to finance current capital projects.

RI Veterans Affairs FY 2011 Resources



Veteran Demographics & Future Needs

The Division of Veterans Affairs faces a growing challenge from the aging of the state's veteran population who served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. As a result, more services including long term care provided by the Veterans Home (half of the total veterans population in Rhode Island is over 65 years of age) will be required. Another challenge will be continuing to meet the needs of an increasing number of veterans in the state who have served in the Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The increase in the number of aging veterans is expected to increase the demand for services. The Rhode Island Veterans Home will have a growing need to provide skilled nursing and dementia placements and is likely to continue to maintain an admission list. The Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery is likely to see an increase in the number of interments, causing a corresponding increase in cemetery maintenance as more burial sites are utilized.

Capital Project Improvements

The Department has received a federal grant to expend operational funds at the Cemetery, which will allow for the improvement of the Cemetery grounds, particularly in the gravesite areas.

A number of capital improvements are ongoing at the Veterans Home, including the design and installation of a new fire alarm system, a design to upgrade the emergency power system, and a design to renovate the Nursing Wards in the South Building.



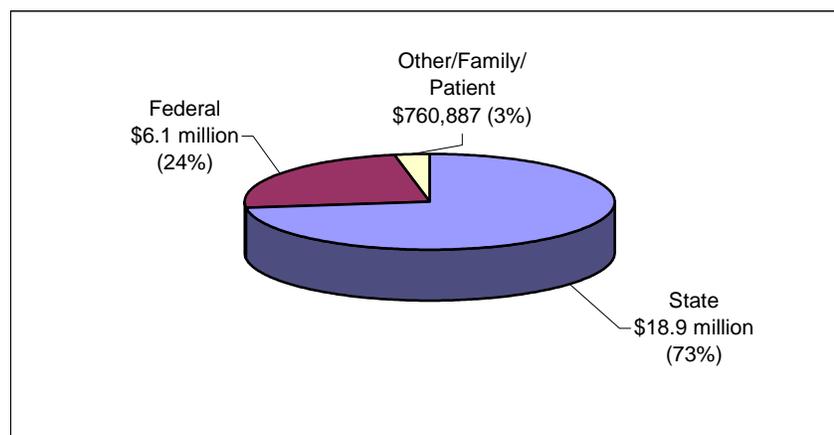
The Rhode Island Veterans Home

The Rhode Island Veterans Home is situated on 110-acres located in Bristol, Rhode Island. The Veterans Home provides quality nursing and domiciliary care to veterans. A variety of social, medical, nursing and rehabilitative services are provided to eligible Rhode Island veterans, their survivors and dependents to help improve their physical, emotional and economic well-being. The Veterans Home admits war service veterans who have been honorably discharged and have resided in the state at least two consecutive years prior to admission and/or were inducted into the military service from the State.

For FY 2011, the average number of nursing care beds and dormitory care beds utilized at the Veterans Home was 163 and 28, respectively. The decrease in the number of beds utilized at the Home reflects the nursing ward consolidation in preparation for the South Building capital project renovation.

The Veterans Home had 198 employees and an operating budget of \$25.7 million for FY 2011. Over 73 percent of the Veterans Home's operating budget was derived from state appropriations. A combination of federal funding and patient income/family revenue funded the balance. The chart below shows the funding allocations.

Veterans Home FY 2011 Resources



There is a thirty-six (36) bed “Special Needs Unit” at the Veterans Home for veterans who are coping with the effects of dementia-related illnesses and conditions. This is a secure area that

provides quality nursing care in a safe and appropriate environment designed to accommodate the needs of veterans with these types of conditions. In addition, the Home maintains a second secured unit of forty (40) beds.

There is a constant demand for long-term care admissions, resulting in an admission list for the Home. The continued need for skilled-level care remains high, and the demand for skilled care and special needs care is projected to continue or increase in the future as the WWII, Korean and Vietnam veterans age.

Patient Services and Amenities

The Veterans Home is licensed and surveyed by the Rhode Island Department of Health and is also certified and monitored by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition to nursing and medical care provided to residents at the Rhode Island Veterans Home, the following specific services are also available:

- ◆ a fully-certified Alzheimer's care unit as described above;
- ◆ a full complement of rehabilitation services;
- ◆ activities therapy;
- ◆ on-site dental, x-ray and pharmacy services;
- ◆ transportation to and from the Veterans Administration Hospital; and
- ◆ social work, chaplaincy and volunteer services.

There is a library on-site, as well as a post exchange, a bank, a barbershop and a beautician. Religious services for all denominations are provided and many activities, including movies, crafts, card games, bingo and cookouts take place regularly for the enjoyment of the residents.

Resident Council and Family Council

The Veterans Home has an active Family Council, as well as a Resident Council, which meet regularly to discuss concerns and issues affecting residents. The Family Council exists as an advocacy group on behalf of residents of the Veterans Home and their families and also serves as an advisory body to the Veterans Advisory Council on matters concerning the Veterans Home.

The Veterans Advisory Council

The Veterans Advisory Council, which was created to advise the Department of Human Services on matters relating to Veterans Home rules, policies and regulations, continues to meet and provide ongoing service to the Division and veterans in the state. The Council has dedicated itself to improving the lives and well being of Rhode Island veterans by enhancing the services and programs available to them. The Council is made up of veterans, veterans organizations, current and former members of the RI General Assembly and representatives of the general public.

Accomplishments & Capital Projects

During FY 2011, a number of initiatives were undertaken or completed at the Rhode Island Veterans Home including the expansion of the fire protection system, designs for nursing ward

renovations in the South Building, and an emergency power upgrade. Some of the specific initiatives include:

- Completion of a design and installation of a new fire alarm system
- Completion of a design for the emergency power system upgrade
- The design for the renovation of the Nursing Units in the South Building was begun
- Medical equipment and electrical bed upgrade
- The Veterans Home has been a training site for student nurses from Bristol Community College, Diamond Regional Technical, and Rhode Island College

Rhode Island Veterans Home Program Objectives

- ◆ Continue to maintain quality patient care services to resident veterans.
- ◆ Improve the In-Service Training Program by increasing the educational training offered.
- ◆ Continue to expand the Quality Improvement Plan and Quality Assurance Goals.
- ◆ Compliance with both the new VA State Home Survey Standards and the Department of Health Standards.

Program Indicators

- ◆ Ongoing Internal Quality Assurance Studies and Monitoring Devices such as: Foley Catheter monitoring, Universal Precautions and Measures of Performance, Resident Falls, Pain Management, Abuse & Neglect, Mood Monitoring, Nutrition and Weight Loss, Pressure Sore Management and Drug Reduction, Admission Policies (28 Indicators monitored), In-House resident transfers, Fire Drill Monitors, and the MDS – CQI Checklist.
- ◆ Continue to support both the Family Council and the Resident Council by assisting them in their missions wherever possible.
- ◆ Successful surveys by the Rhode Island Department of Health, Department of Veterans Affairs, OSHA, the RI State Fire Marshall and any other regulatory agency governing the function and maintenance of nursing homes.

The Veterans Transitional Supportive Program (VTSP)

The Veterans Administration also operates the Veterans Transitional Supportive Program (VTSP) out of the Home's Bristol location. The VTSP is a collaborative effort by the Rhode Island Veterans Home and the US Department of Veterans Affairs to assist homeless veterans in their return to community living. The mission of the VTSP is to provide the necessary combination of services, including residential substance abuse treatment, work therapy, individual counseling, medical and psychiatric treatment, education and training to homeless veterans and those at risk for homelessness so that they can function independently in the community. Each veteran has an individualized treatment plan and works with a case manager to resolve issues contributing to their homelessness.

In FY 2011, 272 homeless veterans received services through the homeless program; 37 veterans were enrolled in the residential VTSP program. The average length of stay for residents successfully discharged was 271 days.

Veterans Transitional Support Program Program Objectives

Improve the success of the Veterans Transitional Support Program (VTSP) Quality Improvement Plan. The VTSP is required to adopt national outcome monitors by the Northeast Program Evaluation Center (NEPEC). Critical monitors of program performance include structural measures, patient characteristics, process measures and outcome measures.

Program Indicators and Data

- ◆ Reduction in alcohol related problems of veterans treated from their point of entry into residential treatment to the time of discharge remains above the national average.
- ◆ Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist assigned to the program completed vocational assessments of all homeless veterans within 30 days of admission.
- ◆ According to the federal Department of Veterans Affairs' (DVA) *Health Care for Homeless Veterans: The Twenty-Third Annual Report*, March, 2010, 86.0% of all Rhode Island VTSP residents secured housing at the time of discharge compared to the 81% national average. The same report noted that the average length of stay for our program was 271 days versus the national average of 691 days.



The Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

The Division of Veterans Affairs maintains a dignified and solemn military cemetery, which provides a final resting place for Rhode Island Veterans who have served their country honorably during wartime, as well as their spouses and dependents. According to Federal statistics the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery is the fourth busiest state cemetery in the nation. The Veterans Cemetery provides burial memorial services, and maintains buildings and grounds covering its 338-acres in the Town of Exeter.

Eligibility for burial at the Veterans Cemetery was expanded in 2004 and has since included active service personnel who received an honorable discharge and at least two years of service as well as twenty-year retirees of the Rhode Island National Guard. Veterans are interred at the cemetery at no cost to the veteran or their family members.

Committals are conducted with military honors and memorial services are provided at the cemetery. The buildings, including a Memorial Chapel, a Committal Building and Columbarium Area, and grounds of the cemetery are carefully maintained. Maintaining the cemetery's dignified presence and enhancing cemetery related services are shared goals of the Division of Veterans Affairs, the state's veteran community and a number of veterans' organizations.

These organizations have worked hard to raise private funds resulting in the installation of a number of important and significant war monuments on the grounds over the past several years including the World War II Memorial; the Korean War Memorial; the RI Women's Veterans Memorial; the Armenian-American Monument; and the World War II Submarine Memorial. Altogether, nearly thirty monuments and memorials dedicated to veterans of specific wars and

conflicts have been erected on the cemetery grounds including the most recent addition to the cemetery grounds, the Combat Infantry Badge and the Rhode Island National Guard Monument.

Memorial Day Ceremonies are conducted each year at the Veterans Cemetery in honor of deceased veterans who selflessly served their state and country. Approximately 750 Rhode Islanders, including the Governor and other dignitaries, as well as veterans and their families, with the assistance of the Rhode Island National Guard, participated in the 2011 ceremonies. The Principal Speaker was Colonel (Ret) Susan Luz, U.S. Army.

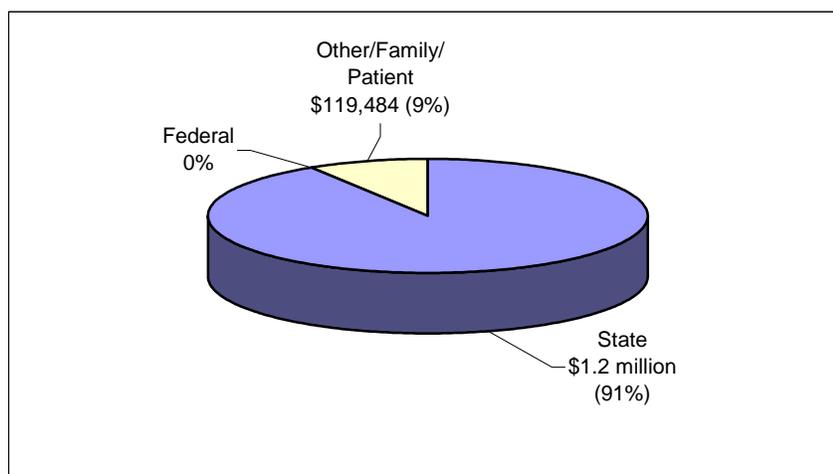
Interment Utilization

Approximately 28,000 interment sites have been utilized at the Cemetery, covering approximately 100 of the 338 acres. While the Veterans Cemetery's Master Plan proposes an increase in interment capacity to 72,500, the current capacity stands at approximately 43,000 sites, including niches. The average annual number of interments for the last several years is over 1,200. The actual number of interments for FY 2011 was 1,272.

The Division of Veterans Affairs has continued to project an increased demand for burial services in the next several years due to the aging of the World War II and Korean War veterans, their spouses and dependents. This growth will lead to an increase in the amount of acreage requiring "perpetual care" by cemetery staff and the number of monthly interments occurring. Meanwhile, due to an increase in eligible veterans choosing cremation, the cemetery opened its first Columbarium area (2002), which has curtailed, to some extent, the number of in-ground cremation interments, thus saving acreage for full interments. In calendar year 2008, the 29 remaining niches of the original columbarium were utilized, which filled the original wall of niches.

The Veterans Cemetery had 11 employees in FY 2011. Its operating budget for the fiscal year 2011 was \$1.3 million. The following charts will show the resource breakdown funding the cemetery budget:

RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery FY 2011



Accomplishments & Capital Improvements

The Division of Veterans Affairs recently received a three year, \$2.1 million grant from the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. This grant will provide financing for improving the appearance of the Cemetery to National Shrine status. Upgrades will include leveling of grave markers, landscaping, augmenting the irrigation system, and creating defined rows and aisles of the graves. This will enhance the overall appearance of the Cemetery, assuring a dignified and aesthetically pleasing environment for all visitors.

Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery Objectives

- ◆ Continue the ongoing beautification and memorialization program with the support and assistance of Rhode Island-based Veterans' Service Organizations and the R.I. Advisory Council to Veterans Affairs.
- ◆ Continue to reduce waiting times for Interment Services through the use of the new Committal Building and Columbarium area for those veterans who have chosen cremation as their interment alternative. (This has been built primarily with Federal funds allocated by the National Cemeteries Service.)
- ◆ Continue to meet the needs of all Rhode Island's eligible veterans and their families, for increased interments and increased perpetual care of all interment sites and monuments.

Program Indicators

- ◆ Number of interments (according to War Service Era, Reserve/National Guard status), cremation interments and Eligible Dependents.
- ◆ Length of time funeral processions must wait for Chapel Ceremony.
- ◆ Availability of future burial sites and columbarium niches through 2050.



Veterans Affairs/ Veteran Assistance

The Veterans Affairs/Assistance Program works with social, medical and rehabilitative staff within the division and with outside agencies to assist Rhode Island Veterans and their families in accessing qualified state and federal program benefits and services.

The Office of Veterans Affairs continues to offer a wide range of social services including casework, counseling, referral, budget management, family relations, health care, and technical assistance in completion of claims for veterans (pensions, compensation, Social Security). Other direct assistance includes home visits to veterans applying for admissions to the Rhode Island Veterans Home.

The Veterans Affairs Divisional Office has been located traditionally at the Rhode Island Veterans Home in Bristol. This location enables the Veterans Affairs staff to gain greater access

to this state's veteran population and other related programs and has afforded the Division the opportunity to become more involved in other statewide programs that provide services to veterans. The Veterans Affairs Office has available for consultation individuals who can serve as Women's Veterans Coordinator on a volunteer basis.

State legislation enacted in FY 1998 created the "Persian Gulf Relief and Information Commission." The Commission was expanded from seven to nine members during the 2006 session of the General Assembly. The Office of Veterans Affairs has become the repository of all information gained through the activities of this Commission. At present, the Commission continues to create a Gulf War Registry of Rhode Island Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War.

The office continues to be in the forefront implementing programs to support the new "GI Bill" for OEF/OIF veterans and in working with other organizations to support housing initiatives for veterans.

Program Objectives

- ◆ Continue to do all intake casework in preparation for application and acceptance to the Rhode Island Veterans Home.
- ◆ Maintain a statistical database of all information gathered and processed by the "Persian Gulf War Relief and Information Commission".
- ◆ Improve coordination of all pertinent information that might affect veterans of this State, through sharing information from both the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and/or any State chartered veterans service organization.
- ◆ Develop an improved system by which Veteran Public Service Information can be disseminated through the various media sources.
- ◆ Become a partner with all public and private agencies that serve veterans in an effort to educate both the service workers and the veteran as to what benefits and health care systems are available to them and how to access these benefits.
- ◆ Assist with demobilization of Rhode Island National Guard units returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) with re-entry into civilian life.
- ◆ Distributed a Health Survey to all veterans listed in the Rhode Island registry of OIF/OEF veterans. The survey asks a number of health, family, and life experiences due to the deployment.
- ◆ Develop an effective outreach program with Rhode Island's Higher Education Authority and State Colleges and Universities to promote the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (the "new GI Bill").
- ◆ Work collaboratively with the Governor's Housing Office on initiatives to reduce the number of homeless veterans.

Statutory History

Title 30, Chapter 24, Sections 1 and 2 established the Rhode Island Veterans' Home.

Title 30, Chapter 17 created the Veterans Affairs/Assistance Program.

Title 30, Chapter 25, Section 14 authorized the operation of the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery.